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THE BERLIN WALL AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS

ANNCR: ON AUGUST THIRTEENTH, NINETEEN SIXTY-ONE, THE CITY OF BERLIN WAS DIVIDED BY A WALL OF BRICK, STONE AND BARBED WIRE---BUILT BY THE EAST GERMAN COMMUNIST REGIME. VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY HAS THESE THOUGHTS ON THE ANNIVERSARY:

VOICE:

WHEN THE BERLIN WALL WAS FIRST BUILT, FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, IT CAUSED A WORLD-WIDE STORM OF INDIGNATION. THE WALL DIVIDED ONE OF THE GREAT CITIES OF THE WORLD, IMPRISONED THE PEOPLE OF EAST GERMANY, AND PROVIDED A HIGHLY VISIBLE SYMBOL OF THE GREAT DIVISION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST. THE INDIGNATION WAS FUELED, IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, BY THE DEATH, WOUNDING OR IMPRISONMENT OF THOUSANDS OF PERSONS WHO TRIED TO ESCAPE OVER, UNDER OR AROUND THE WALL.

THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT TODAY MIGHT CONSIDER THE WALL A GREAT SUCCESS FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN VERY EFFECTIVE. BEFORE IT WAS BUILT, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF EAST GERMANS WERE FLEEING TO THE WEST EVERY YEAR---AND, WHILE SOME STILL MANAGE TO ESCAPE, VERY FEW OF THEM DO IT VIA WEST BERLIN. SECOND, BECAUSE IT HAS CEASED TO BE A CONTINUING FOCUS OF INTERNATIONAL INDIGNATION. IN FACT, THIS YEAR'S ANNIVERSARY HAS ATTRACTED LITTLE ATTENTION.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER SENSE IN WHICH THE BERLIN WALL IS A FAILURE. IT STANDS AS A MONUMENT TO THE INABILITY OF THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT TO WIN THE LOYALTY OF ITS PEOPLE---AS A TESTIMONY TO THE FAILURE OF THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM TO WIN THE VOLUNTARY ALLEGIANCE OF THE PEOPLE UNDER ITS CONTROL--AS A WITNESS TO THE POLITICAL BANKRUPTCY OF THAT SYSTEM. WHEN THE SOVIET

UNION BANNED THE PUBLICATION OF PASTERNAK'S NOVEL DOCTOR ZHIVAGO IN THE NINETEEN-FIFTIES IT CONFESSED THAT AFTER ALMOST A HALF-CENTURY OF INDOCTRINATION IT WAS STILL CONVINCED THAT THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE COULD BE SUBVERTED BY A NOVEL. THE BERLIN WALL IS THE SAME KIND OF CONFESSION.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE HAS CHANGED, OF COURSE, SINCE THE BERLIN WALL WAS BUILT. TENSIONS ARE CONSIDERABLY RELAXED; THERE HAS BEEN A FOUR-POWER AGREEMENT ON BERLIN AND A TREATY OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN EAST AND WEST GERMANY---BOTH OF WHOM HAVE BECOME MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS. AND IN SPITE OF CONTINUING STRAINS RELATIONS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST ARE BETTER THAN THEY WERE WHEN THE WALL WAS BUILT. NEVERTHELESS, THE FUNDAMENTAL IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL DIVISION OF EUROPE REMAINS, AND THE BERLIN WALL SYMBOLIZES THAT DIVISION---AN OBSTACLE NOT ONLY TO FREEDOM BUT TO PEACE AS WELL. FOR THAT REASON, THE WALL---THOUGH IT MAY BE TEMPORARILY TOLERATED---CAN NEVER BE ACCEPTED AS A PERMANENT FEATURE OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE.

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